

FBI probing ex-spy's role in task force

By JOE TRENTO

Staff reporter

WASHINGTON — A former CIA agent, already wanted in a plot to murder a high Libyan official, tried to shake down the director of naval intelligence, the FBI has learned.

The same suspect, who was the civilian head of the highly secret intelligence Task Force 157, is also charged with private illegal arms deals.

Edmund P. Wilson, who has been wanted on a federal fugitive warrant since April, has become a pawn in the rivalry between the two admirals who run the U.S. intelligence community.

One of the two, Adm. Bobby Ray Inman, director of the National Security Agency (NSA), confirmed last week that he had asked for an FBI probe into Wilson's activities.

A spokesman for the other, Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said the CIA would have no comment on the matter.

Turner, a classmate of President Jimmy Carter at the Naval Academy, has failed in his attempt to convince the president to put all American intelligence activities under the CIA's control.

Inman, a little-known intelligence professional who is highly respected by Congress, earned Turner's wrath because the NSA has been given increasing control over the nation's spy satellite program. Inman's agency is responsible for the nation's secret electronic communications, intelligence messages and cryptography.

The Sunday News Journal has learned that in recent weeks Turner and his deputies in the CIA have briefed reporters from major news organizations about Wilson and Task Force 157, which grew from a small naval intelligence operation into a large-scale spy group. Those familiar with the briefings say the CIA has tried to lay the blame for the task force's problems at Inman's feet.

Assistant U.S. Attorney E. Lawrence Barcella Jr., chief prosecutor in the case against Wilson, confirmed that the investigation into Wilson was prompted by a complaint from the CIA that Wilson had been palming himself off as a CIA agent. The CIA told Barcella that Wilson no longer had anything to do with the agency.

What the CIA apparently did not know is that Inman gave extensive testimony to FBI investigators about what he had learned about Wilson and Task Force 157.

Inman, in a rare telephone interview, told the Sunday News Journal that he closed down Task Force 157. "I closed it down because it was out of control and because its continued operation was a drain on Navy resources."

"I fired Wilson because I thought he was a petty grafter, what we call a 5 percent."

The most serious charge in the indictment against Wilson is his alleged involvement in a conspiracy to murder an opponent of Libyan leader Moammar Khadafy in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1977.

The indictment, handed down in Washington last April, also includes several counts of conspiracy to ship rifles to Libya. Then, as now, the United States had a ban on shipping weapons to Libya.

Wilson, 56, whose arms dealings made him a multi-millionaire, remains at large. When Wilson failed to respond to the indictment on April 23, U.S. District Court in Washington issued a warrant for his arrest.

According to Barcella, Wilson is believed to be "moving between his offices in Switzerland and London or at his home in Tripoli [in Libya]. Most likely he is in Tripoli."

Barcella said he has talked with Wilson's attorney, Seymour Glanzer. Glanzer refused to comment on his client.

From sources in the CIA, at the National Security Agency, the FBI and in the Congress, the Sunday News Journal has put together an account of Task Force 157, Wilson's connections to the CIA and Inman's actions.

Task Force 157 was formed in 1968 by Admiral Thomas Moorer, when he was chief of naval operations, to give naval intelligence better communications and human spy

who had infiltrated the task force at the behest of the CIA — were actually sending the information to the CIA.

In 1974 Kissinger told a Senate committee that a Navy clerk assigned to his office, who had access to "eyes-only" messages to President Nixon, was also forwarding them to Moorer.

By the time Inman shut down the unit in late 1975, Task Force 157 had grown from a few intelligence operatives to 167 field agents and 200 headquarters officials.

Using a number of phony business fronts, the task force became a free agent, competing with and undermining other intelligence groups and dealing directly with foreign governments, some them hostile to the United States.

It was involved in a wide range of intelligence activities, many paralleling the activities of the CIA, including evaluating Soviet ballistic missile strength and anti-submarine warfare.

Inman told investigators that millions of dollars being spent by the task force could not be accounted for.

The bulk of the staff was drawn from CIA contract spies, not on full-time duty with the agency, or from the military. Exactly how the task force was put together and how it grew is still not clear.

After Wilson was fired by Inman, he resumed his contract work for the CIA by organizing a group of Cuban refugees to conduct terrorist activities in South Africa and Latin America. A number of the task force employees had been CIA-trained Cuban operatives were hired by Wilson, according to FBI sources.

Although Wilson worked with the Task Force 157 project from 1971 to 1975, he remained on the CIA payroll and reported to Theodore Shackley, who had been former CIA director Richard Helms' right-hand man for clandestine operations.

When Inman fired Wilson, Shackley called the admiral and urged him to keep Wilson on. Shackley, reported not to be with the CIA any more, could not be located for comment.

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SARM-SECURITY*

BY BARRY MAY

WASHINGTON, MARCH 20, REUTER - THE HEAD OF THE SUPER-SECRET NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY PUBLICLY DENIED TODAY THAT IT HAD EVER SPIED ON THE PRIVATE TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS OF PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS.

CODE-BREAKING EXPERT DAVID KAHN ALLEGED AT A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE HEARING THAT THE NSA, A MILITARY UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING U.S. COMMUNICATIONS AND BREAKING FOREIGN CODES, HAD A HISTORY OF INTERCEPTING PRIVATE AMERICAN TELEPHONE CALLS.

VICE ADMIRAL BOBBY INMAN, DIRECTOR OF THE NSA, CHALLENGED THE ALLEGATION, SAYING HE HAD INVESTIGATED PREVIOUS SIMILAR CHARGES. "I CANNOT FIND ANY EVIDENCE THAT IT EVER OCCURRED," HE ADDED.

HE LATER TOLD REPORTERS: "THE NSA HAS NEVER TARGETTED OR INTERCEPTED THE CONVERSATIONS OF PRIVATE U.S. CITIZENS."

ADMIRAL INMAN DID NOT INCLUDE IN HIS DENIAL OTHER ALLEGATIONS MADE PUBLIC DURING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS IN THE MID-1970S THAT THE NSA HAD MONITORED AMERICANS' TELEX AND CABLE MESSAGES IN WHAT WAS KNOWN AS "OPERATION SHAMROCK."

THOSE ALLEGATIONS CAME TO LIGHT IN HEARINGS CONDUCTED BY THE SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE INTO ABUSES BY THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.

ADMIRAL INMAN SAID THE NSA HAD RECEIVED INFORMATION INVOLVING U.S. CITIZENS' FOREIGN CONTACTS. BUT THE ALLEGATION THAT THE NSA LISTENED TO PRIVATE TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN AMERICANS WAS PREPOSTEROUS.

"WE COULD NEVER DO IT WITHOUT A LOT OF PEOPLE KNOWING ABOUT IT BECAUSE OF THE SHEER VOLUME," HE SAID.

FEDERAL LAWS PROHIBIT THE INTERCEPTION OF PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN U.S. CITIZENS UNLESS FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE IS INVOLVED.

EARLIER DR KAHN, AUTHOR OF A CLASSIC WORK ON THE MAKING AND BREAKING OF CODES, SAID THE GROWING CONCERN OF MANY INDIVIDUALS OVER THE PRIVACY OF INFORMATION ABOUT THEM IN THE HANDS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS HAD LED SECURITY EXPERTS TO CONSIDER CODES AS ONE METHOD OF PROTECTING FILES FROM UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS.

HE ADDED: "FEAR OF TERRORISM AND INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE HAS CAUSED MANY BUSINESS EXECUTIVES TO SCRAMBLE THEIR TELEPHONE TALK."

REUTER 1659

NSA Director Lauds 2 Intelligence Panels On Keeping Secrets

By George Lardner Jr.

Washington Post Staff Writer

The director of the National Security Agency said yesterday that his codebreaking organization's secrets have been better kept by the House and Senate Intelligence committees than they have been by the executive branch.

Testifying before the House Intelligence Committee, the NSA director, Vice Admiral B. R. Inman (USN), said he had no qualms about discussing even tightly guarded details about NSA "sources" and "methods" with the two congressional panels set up to oversee the intelligence community.

His views, expressed at a hearing on a proposed legislative charter for the U.S. intelligence community, seemed to contrast sharply with Tuesday's testimony by Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner. The CIA director contended that he should not be required to disclose any intelligence sources or methods to the two committees.

The proposed charter would oblige the CIA and all other U.S. intelligence agencies to provide the intelligence committees with whatever information they feel they need. Turner took the position that this would conflict with his existing statutory duty, as director of central intelligence, to protect sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure.

Adm. Inman took no stand on whether full congressional access to information should be required by law—a step that the CIA and the Carter White House strongly oppose—but he said he has always felt free to discuss any NSA secrets with the Intelligence committee.

By contrast, Inman said, "I'm not comfortable with a lot of discussions about sources and methods in the executive branch." He gave no examples, but he said "my experience with these two committees [Senate and House Intelligence] has been better than my experience with the executive branch has been."

Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.) said he agreed wholeheartedly and told Inman that "I'm just sorry you weren't here yesterday [Tuesday] morning" when Turner testified.

"That means I'm probably in trouble," Inman replied.

Turner said Tuesday that he would cut his budget for human intelligence collection in half if Congress passed a law requiring full access to information. He said it would have a "chilling effect" on sources abroad.